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Tim Martinson Assumes Statewide Leadership for Viticulture at Cornell

by Timothy P. Krakowiak

GENEVA, NY: Timothy E. Martinson, who has directed the Finger Lakes Grape Program in Penn Yan for nearly a decade, will assume statewide responsibilities for coordination of viticulture extension programs in his new position as senior extension associate with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE).

"Dr. Martinson brings a wealth of viticulture knowledge and creativity in applied research and extension to the job," said CCE director Helene Dillard. "I am confident the statewide viticulture extension program will flourish under Tim's leadership, and provide countless benefits to the New York State grape industry."

In his dual appointment with the horticulture departments on the Geneva and Ithaca campuses in Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS), Martinson will further develop Cornell's nationally prominent applied research programs in grape and wine production to support and improve the viability and competitiveness of those industries in New York.

"I want to focus on a few areas that have strong economic and environmental impacts for growers and wineries in New York," said Martinson. "Growers spend an enormous amount of money and time protecting vines from winter injury. There is a need to improve practices and reduce costs in this area. We already have a statewide 'Sustainable Viticulture' project, and I think there is a great opportunity to take a closer look at practices for improving soil characteristics to produce better grapes with fewer fertilizer inputs."

Martinson received his M.S. and his Ph.D. in entomology, from Cornell, in 1988 and 1990, respectively. He then worked as a research support specialist until 1996 in the grape entomology program at Cornell.

Martinson's introduction to viticulture came during a five-year experiment at the Vineyard Research Lab in Fredonia when he was measuring the effects of grape leafhopper feeding on the yield of Concord grapes. "I came to realize how the effects of what happened one year carried over into the next, and that got me hooked on viticulture," said Martinson. After analyzing yield, cluster and pruning weights, his resulting publication appeared in the American Journal of Enology and Viticulture, and was ultimately awarded "Viticulture Paper of the Year" in 1997 by the American Society for Enology and Viticulture.

The wine and grape industries now have a \$3.3 billion impact on the New York state economy and there is a greater demand for coordination of statewide extension efforts. Cornell has expanded grape and wine outreach on Long Island and in the Hudson and Champlain valleys, created new enology and viticulture curricula for undergraduates, and plans to build a new research and extension laboratory facility in the Lake Erie region. Three new enology and viticulture faculty members have been hired, and a search is underway to fill the position recently vacated by Thomas Henick-Kling, who directed wine research and extension at Cornell since 1987. Following Martinson's promotion, the Finger Lakes Grape Program will also seek a new director.

"The transition of Tim Martinson to statewide responsibility represents a very positive step in Cornell's commitment to the New York State wine industry," said Chris Watkins, associate director of extension. "This is especially important at a time when additional resources at Cornell are being focused toward the industry, and faculty efforts are expanding in Geneva and Ithaca. The expertise and skills available at Cornell to help the industry continue to grow are world class, and I am certain that Tim will continue to enhance these efforts."

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Pictures are linked to hi-res scans



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Credit: J. Ogradnick – NYSAES, Cornell University

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